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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, EU, CLIMATE,
HONDURAS, U.S.-GERMANY, SWITZERLAND; BERLIN

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[¶1.](#) Lead Stories Summary

ZDF-TV's and ARD-TV's primetime newscasts opened with stories on the trial of suspected Nazi war criminal Demjanjuk. Most newspapers led with stories on the continuing international criticism of the Swiss ban on building new minarets. Sddeutsche led with a story on the German government's policy on tax cuts. Berliner Zeitung and FT Deutschland led with reports on the European approval of the SWIFT agreement with the United States. Several media highlighted the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Editorials focused on the aftermath of the Swiss referendum and the trial against Demjanjuk.

[¶2.](#) (U.S.) President Obama's Afghanistan Strategy

There was hardly any coverage of President Obama's upcoming speech in the German media. Under the headline "Obama bids for more soldiers in Afghanistan," FT Deutschland (12/01) reported that the President would announce the "long-awaited strategy" on Afghanistan today. "It will

be Obama's task to sell the enormous mission with an unclear end date to an increasingly critical public. He is expected to do this by incorporating military reinforcements into a general strategy," the paper noted.

Under the headline "Brown upstages Obama," die tageszeitung (12/01) reported that "a day prior to the U.S. President's announcement of the new strategy on the war in Afghanistan, British Prime Minister Brown announces details.... He added that, apart from Britain and the U.S., eight other NATO countries also pledged more troops.... In addition, Afghan President Karzai will attend the Afghanistan conference on January 28 in London. He is expected to promise the training of an additional 50,000 Afghan soldiers in 2010 and to send them to the province of Helmand.... Brown welcomed McChrystal's report, but was annoyed that Obama took so long to respond to it. He therefore did not have any scruples about announcing the strategy earlier."

Germany media focused on the aftermath of the September 4 airstrikes against fuel tankers near Kunduz. In a lengthy editorial, FT Deutschland (12/01) remarked under the headline "Chance for improvement" that "the matter is not over at all after the resignation of the former defense minister Jung. It will only be the case when an investigatory committee clarifies certain questions - particularly the role of the German chancellor... Merkel must accept the accusations that she did not sufficiently care about the event in Afghanistan and failed to control her defense minister. In the first days after the bombardment, Merkel did not say anything. Only four days later, she said in a government declaration that criticism from abroad would be inappropriate. She obviously did not try to get a comprehensive impression on the events."

13. (Iran) Nuclear Program

Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/01) editorialized: "Western governments in general and the American government in particular must slowly admit that their approaches to Iran are not well received. Or as the French defense minister bluntly put it: President Obama's policy of reaching out a hand has failed. The Iranian leadership does not even seriously consider negotiating over the part of its nuclear program that might be used for military purposes. On the contrary, it uses the resolution of the Vienna authority as a cheap excuse to expand the program.... Regardless of whether Iran is technically capable of doing this or whether it is just hot air, serious negotiations are something different. Those protagonists who are trying to resolve the nuclear conflict are slowly running out of ideas - also because they have been playing the Iranian gamble for time for far too long. This, at least, should be ended."

14. (EU) Lisbon Treaty

Several papers carry extensive coverage of the Lisbon Treaty entering into force on December 1. Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/01) carried reports on the authorities the various EU institutions will now have.

Under the headline: "Europe's New Instruments," and reported that "European policies remain complicated but many things have now been clearly structured."

Die Welt (12/01) wondered under the headline: "Will The EU Now Become a Better one?" and answered the question saying: "Doubts and risks remain. The fight is over. As of today, Europe functions according

new rules. As of today, the so-called Lisbon Treaty enters into force. The text is cool, technical, and short - and only specialists will understand it. But for Europeans' everyday life, the new

treaty has no consequences, while a lot will change in the engine room in Brussels." "

"The End of the Beginning," headlined Tagesspiegel (12/01) and reported: "A new phase of European unification will begin this Thursday. After almost ten years of political fighting and new beginnings, the Lisbon Treaty will now enter into force. In contrast to the European Constitution, which failed in 2005 and which was simpler, more obvious, and more ambitious, the Lisbon Treaty is not a completely rounded piece of work but a compromise in which the scars of corrections, deletions, and national reservations are visible."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/01) carried a front-page editorial headlined: "The European Learning Process," and judged: "The path of the European Union to the Lisbon Treaty that enters into force this

Tuesday can basically be described only as a sad story. But a glorious chapter cannot grow on such a sad story. The Lisbon Treaty is better than its reputation and can really help the EU do its business, but the path to this result demonstrated that Europe has reached the

limits of its political capacity. It will be unable to go beyond Lisbon simply because many politicians and many of its citizens do not want this. Evidence of this is the appointment of the two politicians who are to fill the two most important political portfolios. A strong leadership in the EU and, closely linked to it, a grown global policy significance of the EU cannot be imposed on the people by means of a constitution or a political coup. Leadership in Europe develops and consolidates when there is a growing insight that the EU states can reach their political goals only together. This is a permanent learning process, and a treaty or a constitution cannot shorten it."

Under the headline: "Lisbon? Europe!" Die Welt (12/01) opined: "Now, on December 1, the Lisbon Treaty has entered into force with two weak leaders at the top, one unknown Belgian, and an even more unknown British politician. This is characteristic, un-heroic, and not very festive. The European Parliament will get more rights, majority

decisions will now be valid within the European Council and everything sounds as if the optimum institutional developments have now been reached.... The Europe of citizens, however, remains exciting. This is an unprecedented, transnational event whose dimensions are very attracting and create astonishment. Some day in the future, this spirit will breathe new life in the institutions, too."

15. (Climate) Copenhagen Summit

Tagesspiegel (12/01) reported that "next week, the summit of superlatives begins" in Copenhagen. The daily wrote that the "climate summit is likely to break the dimensions of all previous conferences. The agreement to be adopted in Copenhagen is complex, there are many bones of contention, and a consensus has not been reached yet."

Under the headline: "Denmark is Softening its Climate Goals," Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/01) reported: "A few days before the beginning of the Copenhagen UN climate summit, the fighting for a final agreement is getting tougher. On Monday, speculation came up on an alleged Danish draft for a final document. This draft would result in a further weakening of the conference results of which no one expects any binding commitments for carbon dioxide emissions."

16. (Honduras) Elections

According to Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/01), "Elections will be good even if they are held by an illegitimate regime. But quite often they miss their target and do not create any legitimacy such as in the case of Honduras. Can the world accept this wrong labeling? As a matter of fact, it cannot. Honduras is a bad example. It cost Latin America much blood and power to go to the polls instead of staging a coup.

Now a coup again preceded elections. The United States backed leader Micheletti and will support future President Lobo. This is realpolitik - and there is no sign of a new policy towards the region. In return, Washington is now accepting a new rift in relations with Brazil. And the German FDP and its Friedrich Naumann Foundation expressed understanding of Zelaya's ouster. If this Honduran maneuver sets a precedent, then the next president will soon be ousted in Latin America."

Under the headline: "Defeat for Democracy in Honduras," Berliner Zeitung (12/01) editorialized: "For both sides, the turnout is of a strategic interest because it says much about the legitimacy of the elections. Only one thing is certain: Hondurans are fed up with the eternal fight between two men for the president's office. The Hondurans finally want to return to normalcy, which is depressing enough in the poor house of Latin America. But this request for normalcy cannot obscure the fact that these elections were illegal.

The election campaign took place under quasi-dictatorial conditions.... But the normative power of the facts will result in the United States, and later the EU, recognizing the elections. Their argument: People cannot be punished for the stupidity of politicians. As correct as

this argument is, by recognizing the elections, one will cement the defeat of democracy in Latin America 20 years after the end of the military dictatorships."

17. (U.S.-Germany) Swift Agreement

Under the headline: "[Put an] End to Data Fishing," Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/01) opined: "The European Union has found an acceptable solution to the dilemma of protecting data and hunting terrorists at the same time. The agreement between the U.S. and the EU on U.S. security agencies having access to European banking data is not perfect, but it is better than having no rules at all. Now the Europeans have gained time to find a lasting agreement with the participation of the European Parliament (EP). Thus far, the United States has gained access to every fourth banking transaction. This was and still is a blatant violation of data protection rules. It is reasonable to have the EP decide on it. This offers the opportunity for a new public debate and creates the basis for a lasting agreement with the U.S., which does not allow data protection and terrorists to escape."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/01) argued: "For more than eight years, U.S. [security] agencies have inspected the financial transactions of European citizens without any agency here having had an influence on the handling of the data. It is certainly progress that the EU concluded an agreement with the U.S. that puts an end to this fact.

Maybe all concerns of data protection commissioners have not been included in the agreement, but this does not mean that we should do without a technology that helped to capture the Sauerland terrorists. This is something the EP should keep in mind because it will have the last word on it. Now the parliamentarians can show that they are able to cope with the responsibility that the Lisbon Treaty has attributed to them. Those who have a say in EU domestic policies should not forget that Islamic terrorism is still a great danger."

Deutschlandfunk (11/30) commented: "What kind of understanding of democracy does this act reveal? For years, the EU governments, with the German government at the helm, have worked towards the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by referring to an increase in democracy in the EU. But then the EU governments are taking advantage of the last possibility to prevent [the EP] from having a say and have rushed through a bill that guarantees U.S. terror investigators access to European banking transactions a few hours before the Lisbon Treaty enters into force. It is likely that the German and other EU governments are afraid that the United States could have taken it amiss if the talks had dragged along for a few weeks and if the EP had demanded greater concession and information rights. They are certainly right, but this is what we need the EU for to prevent the European countries from giving their approval to everything Washington wants. If governments bypass democratic institutions when discussing the exchange of banking data, they do not create greater security

but
only distrust."

Norddeutscher Rundfunk radio of Hamburg (11/30) broadcast the following commentary: "The SWIFT agreement is still extremely questionable. Evidence has not yet been presented that bank transaction data serves the fight against terrorism. A simple statement that investigators, for instance, in three cases were able

to prevent a terrorist attack because of an exchange of data would be enough for many people. Then everyone could form his/her own opinion. But such figures are not being mentioned. Why not? Because they do not exist? This thought is coming up now."

18. (Switzerland) Swiss Ban on New Minarets

ARD-TV's *Tagesthemen* (11/30) newscast opined: "This is a fiasco for Switzerland's reputation. Fifty-eight percent of the voters seriously damaged the notion that the Swiss nation is open-minded and tolerant... Integration problems were played up as a national threat. What a shame for this freedom-loving country!"

Deutschlandfunk (11/30) radio remarked: "Many Europeans are suspicious about Islam-and most mosques confirm this view. Somewhere between wholesale markets and carpet storerooms, Muslims gather on Fridays and preach in foreign languages. If mosques were situated in the middle of a city and were visible with minarets, everybody would know what is going on there. Muslims would be acknowledged as a part of the society, and Imams would have to expect non-Muslims to listen to their prayers."

Sddeutsche Zeitung (12/01) editorialized: "The Swiss vote matters to all of Europe because we must fear similar results if referendums were to be held in other countries, for instance in France and Germany.... The truth is that the majority of the Swiss Muslims are liberal and hardly religious. Most of them are immigrants or former refugees from Kosovo, Bosnia and Macedonia. All these countries can hope for joining the EU some time in the future.... Then, at the latest, the EU will comprise nations with a majority of Muslim inhabitants. Europe must not wait that long to redefine its relations with Islam."

Frankfurter Rundschau (12/01) commented: "There are similar tendencies in our country. Many people did not have a problem with ignoring the constitution in the dispute over a central mosque in Cologne. Every third person categorically rejects Muslim prayer houses of any size, both with and without minarets. Catholic and Protestant fears of being marginalized are becoming more evident at the moment where another religion begins to leave behind traces in the image of cities and towns. This does not reveal the problems the majority has with the Muslim minority, but the problems non-Muslims have with themselves. A building ban is a helpless and unimaginative response."

MURPHY